

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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R 270735Z NOV 74

FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1596

INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMCONSUL HONGKONG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPORE 4767

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, SN

SUBJ: RAJA BROADENS ATTACK ON NON-COMMUNIST SUBVERSION IN SINGAPORE

REFS: (A) SINGAPORE 4585 (NOTAL); (B) SINGAPORE 4546 (NOTAL);

(C) SINGAPORE 4655 (NOTAL)

1. ONLY TWO WEEKS AFTER HIS SPEECH ON NOVEMBER 9 (REFTEL), FOREIGN MINISTER RAJARATNAM DELIVERED A SECOND LENGTHY ADDRESS ON NOVEMBER 24 WHICH BROADENED AND INTENSIFIED THE GOVERNMENT'S ATTACK ON "NON-COMMUNIST SUBVERSION" IN SINGAPORE. SPEAKING AT A SEMINAR ON "TRENDS IN SINGAPORE" ORGANIZED BY THE LOCAL INSTITUTE OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES, THE FOREIGN MINISTER FOCUSED HIS ATTACKS ON THE MACHINATIONS OF THE "NEW LEFT" WHICH HE SAID WAS ONLY IN THE INCIPIENT STAGE IN SINGAPORE ITSELF, BUT RECEIVED ITS INSPIRATION FROM ELEMENTS OF THE WESTERN PRESS, AS WELL AS WESTERN AND ASIAN INTELLECTUALS AND "COFFEE SHOP RADICALS" IN HONG KONG. HE ALLEGED THAT THE NEW LEFT IS ATTACKING THE GOS FOR ITS DICTATORIAL ONE-PARTY GOVERNMENT, CALLING FOR REMERGER WITH MALAYSIA ON THE GROUNDS OF SINGAPORE'S NON-VIABILITY AND IS PROMOTING THE VIEW THAT SINGAPORE'S MINORITIES (ESPECIALLY MALAYS) ARE OPPRESSED AND, THEREFORE, THE MULTI-RACIAL PAP MUST BE ABANDONED AND AN ALLIANCE OF COMMUNAL PARTIES CREATED.

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2. RAJA ALSO DREDGED UP THE GOVERNMENT'S ACTION IN 1971 IN CLOSING

DOWN THE SINGAPORE HERALD AND CLAIMED THAT ITS FUNDING FROM FOREIGN SOURCES HAD BEEN PART OF AN EFFORT TO ESTABLISH A PAN-ASIAN MASS MEDIA NETWORK TO WIN MINDS, NURTURE OPPOSITION GROUPS AND PRESSURE GOVERNMENTS. ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT MENTION THE CHASE MANHATTAN BANK, HE SAID AN AMERICAN BANK HAD ADVANCED UNSECURED LOANS TO THE HERALD CONTRARY TO HEADQUARTERS DIRECTIVES.

3. RAJA CONSIDERED IT RATHER ODD THAT SOME ELEMENTS IN SINGAPORE SHOULD ADVOCATE THE ABANDONMENT OF MULTI-RACIAL PARTIES IN FAVOR OF AN ALLIANCE OF COMMUNAL PARTIES AT A TIME WHEN MALAYSIA WAS MOVING "TOWARDS A UNITED NATIONAL PARTY OF WHICH THE NATIONAL FRONT IS THE PROTOTYPE." HE THOUGHT NATIONAL PARTIES HELPED TO KEEP COMMUNAL

TENSIONS IN CHECK, AND THOUGHT AN ALLIANCE OF COMMUNAL PARTIES ONLY INTENSIFIED COMMUNAL TENSIONS. HE SAID CERTAIN MALAY POLITICIANS IN SINGAPORE HAD INITIATED A CAMPAIGN DIRECTED TO COUNTRIES OUTSIDE SINGAPORE SEEKING MORAL AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO HELP THE MALAY COMMUNITY AGAINST ALLEGED NEGLECT, DISCRIMINATION AND OPPRESSION.

4. FROM THE LIMITED INFORMATION AVAILABLE, RAJA'S SECOND SPEECH IN 15 DAYS ATTACKING NON-COMMUNIST SUBVERSION IS CLEARLY A CALCULATED ACTION DIRECTED BY THE PRIME MINISTER AND APPROVED BY CABINET. RAJARATNAM TOLD THE AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER HIS SPEECH WAS MOTIVATED BY CONCERN OVER (A) THE EFFORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL STUDENT MOVEMENT (ESPECIALLY AN ASIAN STUDENT SEMINAR IN HONG KONG LAST MARCH) TO FOMENT "NEW LEFT" RADICALISM IN SINGAPORE, (B) ATTACKS ON THE GOS BY CERTAIN WESTERN PUBLICATIONS AND (C) THE DETERIORATING ECONOMIC SITUATION WHICH COULD LEND ITSELF TO EXPLOITATION BY EXTREMIST ELEMENTS.

5. THE EMBASSY IS CONVINCED THAT THE LAST FACTOR IS BY FAR THE MOST IMPORTANT. IN THE EMBASSY'S JUDGMENT, RAJA'S SPEECH REVEALS AN EMERGING POLITICAL STRATEGY AIMED AT BOTH SUPPRESSING AND PREVENTING FOR AN INDEFINITE PERIOD VIRTUALLY ANY KIND OF "UNCONSTRUCTIVE" DISSENT SO THAT THE GOVERNMENT CAN MOVE MORE FREELY TO COPE WITH THE DIFFICULT ECONOMIC PROBLEMS IT ANTICIPATES WILL DEVELOP IN THE MONTHS AHEAD. WHILE THIS STRATEGY MAY BE BOTH CALCULATED AND RATIONAL

ELEMENTS OF RAJA'S SPEECHES REVEAL A XENOPHOBIC FEAR OF FOREIGN
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CRITICISM AND SUBVERSIVE INVOLVEMENT IN SINGAPORE, AND CONTAIN PARANOID OVERTONES IN THE SENSE THAT INDIVIDUAL CRITICISMS ARE FANTASIZED INTO SUBVERSIVE PLOTS MASTERMINDED BY MYTHICAL SUBVERSIVE GROUPS. THE SPEECH ALSO SETS THE STAGE FOR A CRACKDOWN ON STUDENT POLITICAL ACTIVISM AND PROBABLY DECISIONS IN FAVOR OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PENDING PROSECUTIONS AGAINST STUDENT LEADER TAN WAH PIOW (REF B) AND NEWSWEEK STRINGER, PANG CHENG LIAN (REF C).

6. ALTHOUGH THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT THE TOP LEADERSHIP IS CURRENTLY CONCERNED OVER LOYALTIES WITHIN THE PAP, LEE MAY BELIEVE THAT

ECONOMIC ADVERSITY COULD PRECIPITATE DIVISIVENESS WITHIN THE PARTY. THEREFORE, RAJA'S SPEECHES COULD ALSO BE INTENDED TO SMOTHER ANY INCIPIENT FACTIONALISM IN THE PAP SINCE HIS UNSPECIFIC ALLEGATIONS AND VAGUE INNUENDOS MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR ANY PROSPECTIVE CRITIC IN SINGAPORE TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN WHAT MIGHT BE ACCEPTED AS CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISMS AND WHAT MIGHT BE BRANDED AS NON-COMMUNIST SUBVERSION. THE SPEECH ALSO PROBABLY REFLECTS A GROWING CONCERN IN THE MINDS OF THE PAP OLD GUARD THAT ATTITUDES ARE DEVELOPING IN SINGAPORE, PARTICULARLY AMONG STUDENTS AND YOUNG PROFESSIONALS, BUT WHICH ARE ANTITHETICAL TO THE ESTABLISHED ETHIC OF HARD WORK, DISCIPLINE, SUBMISSION TO AUTHORITY, AND PERSONAL RESTRAINT FOR THE SAKE OF NATION-BUILDING.

7. TEXTS OF SPEECHES BY POUCH. GRANT

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